

November 20, 1962

Dr. James F. Crow  
The University of Wisconsin  
College of Agriculture  
Madison 6, Wisconsin

Dear Jim:

As Alec will be telling you, I am very sorry to be unable to accept the invitation, which I do appreciate very much, to participate in the dedication of your new building. I hope my good feeling and wishes for success therein may help to make up for my absence.

The main thing I am writing about now is to get your reaction to the position stated in the accompanying paper. I think we have had many conversations about these themes before and while I expect I am taking a somewhat more extended position than in the past, you will be able to recognize it and probably continue to disagree with the relative importance that I would attach to long-range eugenic measures. Apart from this, I would appreciate your thoughts on the implications of success in homotransplantation, and what, if any, measures might be adopted to mitigate some of the difficulties that may arise with the achievement. It is of course possible to argue about the premises of how soon the technique will be perfected, but that is perhaps another matter. If you are willing to accept this premise, it seems to me fairly clear that the availability of organs for transplantation will rapidly become very restricted and place an immense burden on the mechanism of allocation. This could well have serious repercussions, not only within the medical profession in any one country, but also as concerns the world-wide availability of such valuable material.

The one measure that has occurred to me might be worth taking -- apart from the longer term primate breeding programs which probably will take too long to be very effective -- is at least the registry of transplantation operations so that such procedures will be conducted in a context of careful control and reporting. It would perhaps be much easier to establish such a registration procedure at the present time than it would when the moral issues of transplantation were subject to stronger bias. At the moment, perhaps even more important than any specific suggestions, would be the kind of machinery that ought to be set up to explore the necessary forethoughts.

Anyhow, Jim, please let me hear from you, and let your hair down!

As ever,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

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